

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Following the speech President Barack Obama gave before a joint session of Congress, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) released the following statement.

“Valley residents needed to hear President Obama’s speech tonight to know exactly how he wants to reform our health care system. The decisions that we make here in Washington will impact Valley small business owners, farmers and families. Like the President, I believe we can all agree that the health care system is broken and needs repair. All Americans, even those with the best health insurance, can and do face untenable health costs as a result of an illness. For health reform legislation to be successful, at a minimum, four key elements must be addressed. These are catastrophic care, portability, pre-existing conditions and preventive measures. I am happy the President wants to end the practice of denying coverage for pre-existing conditions and will require insurance companies to cover preventative care.

“However, any health care bill that is passed must also improve our Valley’s health care services in rural areas, help develop a medical school at UC Merced, and attract and retain highly qualified general practitioners and specialized physicians. Secondly, the non-partisan Congressional budget analysts need to identify significant savings nationally and greater benefits for people in my district.

“I am not opposed to health care reform, but I am opposed to provisions in HR 3200. It is simply the wrong vehicle to reform the current system. One federal program that touches more of my constituents than any other program is Social Security. President Franklin Roosevelt’s idea started small, and over time was expanded to more and more Americans. Like Social Security, I also prefer a plan that is put into place in stages, rather than trying to implement such a massive effort all at once.”